

REMARKS

Claims 1, 2, and 4-21 are currently pending in this application. Claims 1, 2, and 4 - 11 are canceled herein without prejudice or disclaimer. Claim 12 is amended herein to more fully recite the invention and no new matter has been added by this amendment.

In the Office Action dated November 14, 2003, the Examiner rejected claims 1, 2, 4, 8, and 11 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by *Robson*, and rejected claim 5, 6, and 9 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over *Robson*. Each of these claims is canceled herein, thereby rendering moot the Examiner's rejection. The Examiner also rejected claims 12 - 17, 19, and 21 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by *Ida et al.*, and rejected claim 18 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over *Robson*. Applicants herein traverse these rejections.

Contrary to the Examiner's assertion, *Ida et al.* fails to at least disclose wherein the base portions of the base plates of each of the plurality of pairs of snap elements are attached on a pair of attached bodies at a predetermined interval such that they oppose each other, as recited in amended claim 12. Specifically, the Examiner argues that items 13 and 21, as shown on figures 3 and 4, as a pair of attached bodies. Instead, as set for in the specification, items 13 and 21 are the first and second attachments. They appear to be merely substrates on which the fastening members are mounted. Thus, the base plates of *Ida et al.* are not attached on a pair of attached bodies. Moreover, even, assuming *arguendo*, that these first and second attachments are attaching bodies, they do not provide that the snap elements are at predetermined

intervals. Thus for at least these reasons, claim 12, as well as claims 13 - 21 that depend therefrom, are allowable.

Applicants respectfully request that this Amendment under 37 C.F.R. § 1.116 be entered by the Examiner, placing claims 12 - 21 in condition for allowance. Applicants submit that the proposed amendment of claim 12 does not raise new issues or necessitate the undertaking of any additional search of the art by the Examiner, since all of the elements and their relationships claimed were either earlier claimed or inherent in the claims as examined. Therefore, this Amendment should allow for immediate action by the Examiner.

Furthermore, Applicants respectfully point out that the final action by the Examiner presented some new arguments as to the application of the art against Applicant's invention. It is respectfully submitted that the entering of the Amendment would allow the Applicants to reply to the final rejections and place the application in condition for allowance.

Finally, Applicants submit that the entry of the amendment would place the application in better form for appeal, should the Examiner dispute the patentability of the pending claims.

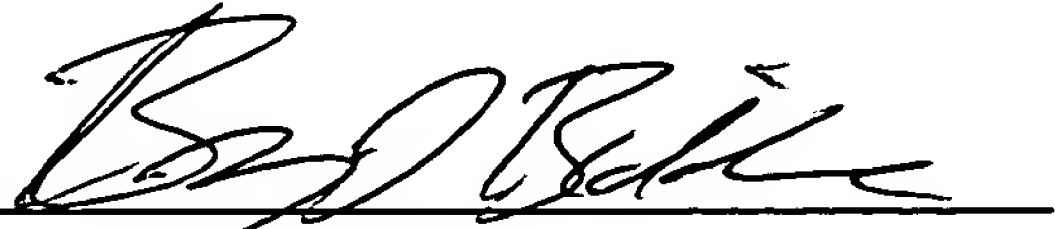
In view of the foregoing remarks, Applicants submit that this claimed invention, as amended, is neither anticipated nor rendered obvious in view of the prior art references cited against this application. Applicants therefore request the entry of this Amendment, the Examiner's reconsideration and reexamination of the application, and the timely allowance of the pending claims.

Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this response and charge
any additional required fees to our Deposit Account 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

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